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LIVINGSTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

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Developer receives \$5 million for Livingston affordable housing project

By Lewis Kendall Chronicle Staff Writer Nov 22, 2017



An artist's rendering of the proposed Bluebunch Flats, a 34-unit affordable housing development inside the old Livingston Memorial Hospital building.

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Rendering courtesy NE45 Architecture

A Missoula-based affordable housing developer has been awarded more than \$5 million in tax credits for a project to repurpose the former Livingston hospital into low-rent apartments.

The Montana Board of Housing allocated \$27 million in credits over the next 10 years — part of an IRS program — to affordable housing projects in Billings, Butte, Kalispell and Lewistown, in addition to the Livingston effort, spearheaded by longstanding Missoula nonprofit Homeword, Inc.

The developer plans to transfer the credits to an investor to help fund the \$7 million Bluebunch Flats renovation project, which will transform the old Livingston Memorial Hospital building on Eighth Street into 34 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments.

As part of the program's requirements, the units will rent to residents who make between 40 and 60 percent of the area median income — in the range of \$16,960 and \$25,440 per person in Livingston.

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The rent, while not subsidized, will line up with these incomes, said Homeword Executive Director Andrea Davis. And although the final levels won't be set until the project is completed sometime in mid-2019, Davis said that rent prices will likely range from \$425 for a studio to \$800 for a two-bedroom.

"There's going to be some people that this is still too expensive for," Davis said. "But this meets a great need of people who are working and making lower and moderate wages. It's a program that will work for many people."

Repurposing an old building doesn't necessarily save money, but is more in keeping with the nonprofit's mission of sustainability, Davis added. The hospital rooms will be converted into apartments with a "generous" amount of common space. Builders will also add modern updates such as solar panels and increased accessibility. Construction is set to begin next summer.

The group is working to secure a Historic Place designation for the project through the National Park Service, which could bring with it additional tax credits.

The Bluebunch development, named after the state grass, is Homeword's 25th affordable housing project across Montana and its 20th time securing an IRS housing credit, according to Davis. The nonprofit was one of the groups behind Larkspur Commons, a 136-unit affordable housing complex off Oak Street in Bozeman that opened in September.

Homeword partnered with the city and county on the Livingston project, as well as Community Health Partners and the HRDC, the latter of which will help connect residents to available housing.

"The more we can provide housing that's affordable, the more stable families and people are," Davis said. "It's absolutely, in our view, what supports a local economy. When people have disposable income, they go out and spend that in a community."

Bruce Brensdal, executive director of the Montana Board of Housing, called Bluebunch an "absolute model" of affordable housing.

"It's really great news that we can help these projects move forward," Brensdal said.

However, parts of the credit program could be at risk. The iterations of tax reform bills currently working their way through Congress call for reductions that could negatively impact housing credits, making projects like Bluebunch untenable, Davis said.

"These programs at the federal level are incredibly important for Montana because Montana doesn't have programs to make up for this," she said. "We rely on these programs."

"In Montana, in every community we talk to there are affordable housing issues. There's such a vast need for it," Brensdal added. "If some of the tax reform stuff goes through, it's going to become harder and harder to meet these needs."

Kendall can be reached at 406-582-2651 or lkendall@dailychronicle.com. He is on Twitter at @lewdak

Lewis Kendall

Lewis Kendall covers business and the economy for the Chronicle.



Commerce's HOME Program Expands Affordable Housing with Funding to 4 Montana Communities

Wednesday, January 3, 2018 / Categories: Community Development Division, Montana Housing



Four Montana communities will receive grants through the Montana Department of Commerce's HOME Investment Partnerships Program to assist with the development of affordable housing for Montanans.

"Every Montanan should have access to a safe and affordable place to call home," Montana
Department of Commerce Director Pam Haxby-Cote said. "These HOME grants will provide more
Montanans with access to an affordable place to live for many years to come."

The following communities have received HOME Investment Partnerships Program grants:

- Butte, Public Housing Authority of Butte: \$750,000 for construction of the Copper Ridge Apartments which will consist of 32 affordable units.
- Belgrade, Habitat for Humanity of Gallatin Valley: \$750,000 to construct two duplexes in Belgrade to serve four households.
- Livingston, Homeword Inc: \$850,000 to acquire and rehabilitate the Livingston Memorial Hospital into
 34 affordable units.
- Helena, Lewis and Clark County: \$277,344 for rehabilitation of the West Mont Farm and Gardens Group Home to serve eight individual adults with developmental disabilities.

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program is the largest federal block grant designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. Montana's allocation of HOME funds is provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Montana Department of Commerce grants these funds to help local governments respond to the need for adequate, affordable housing for qualified individuals, families, and seniors.

For more information, visit our website at comdev.mt.gov/Programs/HOME/



Affordable Housing Development for Livingston in the Works

With 13.2% of Livingston's total population (last estimated in 2016 at 7,401) in poverty, the addition of an affordable housing development would greatly benefit citizens who are currently working and earning lower wages.

How is This Problem Being Addressed?

Over the next 10 years, the Montana Board of Housing has assigned \$27 million in credits to help fund affordable housing projects not only in Livingston, but in Billings, Butte, Kalispell and Lewistown as well. Homeword, Inc., a Missoula-based, non-profit affordable housing developer, has been awarded \$5.8 million in tax credits to transform the old Livingston Memorial Hospital building into 34 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments.

The new apartment complex, Bluebunch Flats, is named after Montana's official state grass, Bluebunch Wheatgrass. In keeping with Homeword's mission of sustainability, hospital rooms in the existing Memorial Hospital building will be renovated and converted into individual apartments.

Units will available to residents who make between 40% and 60% of the area median income. As of last year, median household income for Livingston was \$40,358, while per capital income was just shy of \$27,000. Although rent prices are not yet set in stone, they will likely range from \$425 for a studio to \$800 for a two-bedroom. Construction is set to begin in the summer of 2018, with a projected completion date of mid-2019.

Other Affordable Housing Projects Around Montana:

- Billings: Heights Senior Apartments— 38-unit project for senior citizens
- Butte: Copper Ridge Apartments— 32-unit project for families
- Kalispell: Courtyard Apartments— 32-unit acquisition rehabilitation project for families
- Lewistown: Meadows Senior Apartments— 35-unit acquisition rehabilitation project for senior citizens

Written by Tim Hart on January 19, 2018. Posted in Affordable Housing, Current Events, Home Affordability, Housing Market Trends, Livingston Montana Real Estate, Local News, Montana's Economy, United States Housing Market Tags: affordable housing developments in montana, affordable housing montana, affordable housing projects, bluebunch flats, homeword inc, livingston affordable housing, livingston median income, livingston memorial hospital, livingston mt, livingston real estate

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Moldermorial Hospital

PRBY:SPIRISOUNE DULE prise Staff Writer

Local Sports

 $\begin{array}{c} {}^{\text{Community}} \\ {}^{\text{The fair market rate for the monthly rent on a two-bedroom apartment or} \end{array}$ Anhoused Park County is \$853. But that rental average is beyond the reach Objective county's average hourly wage — \$11.21 per hour — according to Arts & Entertainment Fedar in a document titled "Out Of Reach 2017" on housing costs in the Relleins.

Editorials The document was prepared by the National Low Income Housing Polls coCoalition.

Edital and household should spend no more than 30 percent of its monthly Subscripe on housing, Jessica Burson, fundraising and marketing manager Cowith the Missoula-based Homeword, said Thursday.

Homeword, in conjunction with a similar housing-based nonprofit, NeighborWorks Montana, is working to secure funding to renovate the former Livingston Memorial Hospital property, located at 504 S. 13th St. Homeword will hold a public meeting and open house at the property from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 18.

The purpose of the meeting is to offer tours of the building and, since the area is in construction mode, closed-toe shoes are recommended.

Homeword proposes to build 34 rental units. The units would be a mixture of studios and one and two-bedrooms, Burson said, and include common space both indoors and out. Homeword is also looking for comments from the public on what the project could mean for Livingston residents — both individually as well as the community at large.

"We envision a mixture of seniors and families," Burson said.

A single renter would need to make \$16.40 an hour in Livingston to afford a two-bedroom rental costing \$853 a month. At \$11.21 an hour, applying

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Lawsuit says

Trump tapping \$12B to help farmers



the 30 percent target for housing costs, an employee can afford \$583 a month for rent, according to the "Out of Reach 2017" document.

The income level Homeword seeks to house is roughly in the \$12.23 per hour range, or about \$25,440 per year, depending on household size, she said.

Homeword is pursuing a financing package to develop the former hospital. The financing package includes a competitive application for housing tax credits to the Montana Board of Housing, a federal HOME grant to the Montana Department of Commerce, foundation and individual donations, and mortgage debt, according to a Homeword news release.

The Montana Board of Housing selected the Livingston project as one of eight finalists from among 18 applications to be considered for funding, Burson said. Katie Weaver, an economic and community development agent with Montana State University-Park County Extension, who has been working with the former hospital project, said Thursday the MBOH may ultimately fund five of the eight finalists.

The grant application is due in September, and information gathered from Tuesday's open house will be used to support the application, she said.

"Demonstrated public support was a factor" in Livingston making it to finalist status, Weaver said. "The more public involvement, the stronger the low-income tax credit application will be."

Livingston's rental market has been hit recently by owners selling their rental properties along with an increase in vacation rentals. Fewer rentals available and higher costs can lead to households paying up to 50 percent of their income for housing, Burson said.

"No one should have to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table," she added.

A number of Park County residents pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing.

"In 2014, an estimated 41 percent of renters in Park County and 30 percent of homeowners were paying more than 30 percent of their income for home costs," Homeword Executive Director Andrea Davis said in the news release. "The need has only increased as the demand has skyrocketed since 2014."

Safe and healthy affordable housing creates stable communities and homes where children can grow and thrive, Davis said. And sufficient affordable housing helps a town's overall economics. For example, Burson has heard anecdotally about restaurants reducing the number of pages on

their menus and other businesses needing to reduce the number of hours or days they're open because they can't find employees.

"Home is more than just a roof over your head. It's where jobs go to sleep at night and where kids begin and end their school day," Burson said.

Liz Kearney may be reached at lkearney@livent.net.

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Nation

World

Archivendrea Davis Guest columnist The New Year is approaching, marking the end Montana/Region of a period time and the start of another. This cycle In Court spallows us to reflect on times and people gone by and lets us dream of PREVISION STATE THE FORMER Livingston Memorial Hospital at 13th and Local Sports Crawford will cycle too. For decades, that building housed joy and pain Briand took in many people for a path to better health. Now it will help Angeographe live healthy lives differently, by being home to 34 apartments that Obituaries Arest dents of Livingston can afford. The new name for the building is Feel the bunch Flats, inspired by the Montana state grass and its importance Religion for a forage grass for both livestock and native wildlife and for its Opinion Editorative abilities.

Polls

Compensation of the apartments and will be leading the Letters, Eddevelopment and ownership of the apartments and will be partnering E-North the HRDC. For a bit of background on Homeword, in the last 23 Subscripts we have developed new or preserved close to 900 homes that are contact Us Clastfordable to Montanans in 26 properties in 11 communities. Those are in the form of single family homes and apartments. This will be our fourth historic rehabilitation project. We have also served over 12,500 people in our HomeOwnership Center with financial literacy education, homebuyer education and housing counseling.

We take the time to consider how our properties relate to existing neighborhoods. This is one reason we were excited when Livingston community members reached out to us to help this building have a new purpose. In addition to the diverse neighborhood fabric, we were excited at the challenge of repurposing a former hospital into apartments. We have respect for good, quality buildings and the former hospital is one that provides a great opportunity for a future use. We've been working for two years to put together the financing that will result in homes that are affordable to those earning lower wages or those living with fixed incomes.

Affordable housing is a term that can be used casually and can result in confusion or suspicion. So let me explain just what this is. Housing is considered affordable when you pay 30% of your gross income toward

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housing costs. Bluebunch Flats will have rents limited to those earning 40, 50 and 60 percent of the area median income. Seniors living on fixed incomes and people earning about \$12.23/ hour (\$25,440/year) or less, depending on the size of their household, will be eligible to live at the property. The rents will be capped to remain affordable at those income levels and those with a Section 8 voucher are welcome to apply. By regulation, the rents are updated annually so for today those rents range from \$365 to \$729. We will create studio, one and two-bedroom apartments on the main floor with resident storage and common recreation space in the basement (accessed by an elevator). The property will be fully accessible and will include exterior amenities like community gardens and sitting/gathering areas. We will be developing additional offstreet parking to accommodate the apartments and they will be professionally managed by a certified third-party property management company. Construction will begin in summer of 2018 and the apartments will be ready to lease in the fall of 2019. This can't happen soon enough as people need quality, affordable places to live now. To place your name on the interest list please send an email to bluebunch@thehrdc.org or call (406) 333-2537.

Homes that people can afford have been identified as a critical need by many local businesses, the City of Livingston, Park County, service agencies and individuals. During our listening sessions, we learned of many businesses that could not hire adequate staff because those workers had no where they could afford to live in town. It's simple – homes are where jobs go to sleep at night. Not only does affordable housing construction create jobs, it increases local consumer spending and strengthens local businesses.

Specifically, this project is being financed with federal Housing Tax Credits, administered by the Montana Board of Housing. The housing credits, in addition to Historic Tax Credits, will generate private investment that, along with commercial debt, will allow us to build high quality, energy efficient homes that will remain affordable for 50 years. The Housing Tax Credit has produced more homes for working families than any other in the history of the United States. The future of this resource is at risk because of provisions in the Federal Tax Reform bill. Please visit http://rentalhousingaction.org to learn more. Please visit our website to see some of our properties and our approach to housing development and housing education www.homeword.org.

The New Year will mark a new era for the old hospital. When Bluebunch Flats opens its doors, a new chapter in the life of this building will begin.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Andrea Davis is executive director of Homeword, a nonprofit headquartered in Missoula.

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Montana/Region

In Bourliz Kearney Enterprise Staff Writer How to fund a future additional Missouri

Priver Drug Task Force was a topic of discussion at Tuesday's Livingston

LoCityo Commission meeting.

Community

Briefs & Calendar The discussion was just a preliminary discussion, and no final decision Obtwasemade, although commissioners expressed support for the need.

Arte Entertainment Detective Tim Barnes, of the Park County Sheriff's Office, is the

Retask force's only local officer.

Opinion

Editorials Barnes told the commission the work is time-consuming and an Polls coadditional officer would mean more drug cases could be prosecuted, more Letaddicts helped, and potentially more dealers sent to jail. Editorial Cartoons

subst be goal is to get the cases to the federal system," Barnes said. "With Contact Udatory jail time, we can get them sentenced to five to 10 years and out of the community."

Barnes said methamphetamine, fentanyl and heroin are all in the community, but meth remains a particular problem.

Meth comes mostly from Mexico now and the prices have dropped, he said, and users who could once purchase a gram can now buy an ounce, and those who used to buy ounces can now afford to buy pounds.

"It's an epidemic," the detective said.

City Manager Mike Kardoes addressed how the city might fund a task force officer within the Livingston Police Department. Kardoes estimated the cost of salary and benefits at about \$80,000 per year — because of the skills required, a candidate would most likely be mid-career, qualifying for a higher salary, and initial costs would include gear and a vehicle.

He said a 10-year commitment could be about \$950,000.

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"It's significant but achievable," Kardoes said, suggesting the city could start saving now for a vehicle and, with planning, be able to make a hire one to three years from now.

In other business, the commission approved waiving \$7,580 in fees that could accrue for the project to convert the former Livingston Memorial Hospital to affordable rental units. Homeword's housing development director, Heather McMilin, told the commissioners that not only does every penny count in a project, but that the city waiving the fees sends a strong message to state officials.

The project is one of eight semi-finalists for tax credits the Montana Board of Housing will award to five or six projects at its Nov. 20 meeting, McMilin said.

The city showing support by waiving the fees makes Livingston's application more competitive, she said.

Sanders and Commission Chairman James Bennett both expressed concerns about waiving fees. Sanders asked if the city waived fees for Livingston HealthCare or the Livingston School District during their constructions and was told the city had not. Bennett said the city had denied funding requests to several nonprofits earlier this year and thought it wouldn't be fair to them to waive the fees.

But when it came down to a vote, the fee waiver request passed, with the remaining three commissioners voting yes.

McMilin said fee waiver requests are difficult and thanked the commission for its support.

And the commission heard an update on the work that began in August on the new wastewater reclamation facility, which is the latest term for the sewage treatment plant.

Scott Buecker with the engineering firm AE2S said contractor Dick Anderson Construction saved some time and money by doing its excavation work later in the summer. The later start date meant there was less groundwater to deal with and thus less contaminated soil from the Burlington Northern plume that might need remediation. He said about 50 cubic yards of material tested "hot," but upon further testing, proved to have levels of toxins that tested below treatment thresholds. Livingston resident and city commission candidate Patricia Grabow was in attendance and raised the question of obtaining mitigation funds from the Livingston Restoration Group, a private group that administers the funds from the 2011 Burlington Northern lawsuit settlement. City officials budgeted about \$2 million for soil remediation during the treatment plant construction.

Commissioner Sarah Sandberg asked if the city had been in contact with LRG.

Kardoes said it's difficult to ask for money without knowing the final cost that would be requested. Sanders suggested the city start a conversation sooner rather than later.

Liz Kearney may be reached at lkearney@livent.net. Category: Top Local Stories

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In Byur Liz Kearney Enterprise Staff Writer



Livingston's affordable housing project got a big boost Monday — \$5.8 million in federal housing credits.

The funds will support the remodeling of the former Livingston Memorial Hospital building, located on West Crawford Street. The project is spearheaded by Homeword, a Missoula-based housing nonprofit. Homeword is working with local architect Ron Nemetz and his firm NE45 Architecture.

The announcement follows a meeting Monday of the Montana Board of Housing, which had \$27.6 million in housing credits to distribute in a competitive grant process, according to a news release Tuesday from the Montana Department of Commerce, which oversees the MBOH.

State housing finance agencies, like MBOH, award federal housing credits to developers, who then turn the credits into construction funds by selling them to investors, according to the news release.

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Homeword Executive Director Andrea Davis explained how the tax credits work.

Each year, the federal government, through the Internal Revenue Service, allocates tax credits to each state, she said. Then through a competitive process, organizations, which can be nonprofit or for-profit, apply for the credits.

Homeword will sell those credits to a private investor. The private investor pays Homeword cash, and the investor receives tax credits that reduce their federal tax obligation, which is spread over 10 years, Davis said.

In partnership with a similar nonprofit, NeighborWorks Montana, the building was purchased from local developer Chris Salacinski for \$1.2 million, Davis said.

The total estimated cost of remodeling the former hospital is \$7.7 million, according to the news release. To raise the additional \$1.9 million, Homeword is pursuing a combination of funding, including a private mortgage, additional federal funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and historic tax credits, which are administered by the National Park Service, Davis said.

Homeword is pursuing National Historic Registry status for the former hospital because it's an example of a style of architecture from the 1950s, Davis said. Apportioning a part of the building's worth as "historic," Davis said, using the figure \$5 million as an example, up to 20 percent of that value can be awarded in tax credits.

"But we're racing against the clock," Davis said, because the historic tax credit program is on the chopping block under the current tax reform legislation being considered in Congress. Under the House version of the tax bill, the program is eliminated, and under the Senate version, reduced from 20 to 10 percent, Davis said.

Homeword would also take on a private mortgage, currently estimated to be about \$650,000.

Homeword renamed the project "Blue Bunch Flats."

"We had to stop calling it the old hospital," she said.

The name comes from blue bunch wheatgrass, which is the Montana state grass, Davis said, and the "flats" is a nod to the Prairie-style architecture of the old hospital.

Davis said she hopes, after bidding out the project and other tasks are completed, that construction can begin in June, with a projected "lease

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out" date in fall 2019. Homeword partners with the local Human Resources Development Council, known as HRDC.

She said it's too soon to have an actual waiting list for apartments, which will include studios, one, and two-bedroom units, but anyone wishing to be put on an "interest" list may email info@homeword.org or call (406) 532-4663. The units will be available to income-qualifying families and individuals as well as seniors and the disabled, Davis said.

The MBOH news release said the project will result in 77 jobs earning \$3.2 million in wages.

Liz Kearney may be reached at lkearney@livent.net.

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ArThen East trillion tax cut included a change in how investors may deduct Featherstoric tax credits, according to Andrea Davis, who is the executive Religion Ophicor of Homeword, the Missoula-based nonprofit handling the Edicon version of the former Livingston Memorial Hospital into housing. Polls

Column

Let Investors purchase tax credits that provide them with tax relief. Under Edipre Violes tax laws, investors could apply historic tax credits to one tax E-Edition. Under the new law, Davis explained, those tax credits must now be compread out over five years.

Claff@freword had secured about \$1.2 million in historic tax credits, Davis said last week.

"It depletes the value of the tax credit," Davis said. "We don't have a firm number yet on how it might affect our project," but it could be as much as \$150,000 to \$200,000.

It's possible the nonprofit may have to ask for more public funds, she added.

Montana Republican Rep. Greg Gianforte and Sen. Steve Daines defended the change to the tax law, which did not cut the historic tax credit program entirely.

"It is important that low-income housing is available to hardworking Montanans who need support, which is why the low income housing tax credit was preserved," Daines said in a statement to The Enterprise. "While the 20 percent tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings was preserved, it did strive to curtail how much

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money high-income investors and developers reap from taking advantage of the credit. Many special provisions of the tax code were trimmed to also broaden tax relief for hardworking Americans by doubling the child tax credit and standard deduction."

Meanwhile, the Montana Department of Commerce announced last week the hospital remodeling project was awarded an \$850,000 grant in a competitive grant awarded through the department's HOME Investment Partnerships Program, funding that comes to the state through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a DOC news release stated.

Only three other communities received HOME funds — Butte and Belgrade both received \$750,000 and Helena received \$277,344, according to the Commerce news release.

Homeword is prepared to borrow up to \$600,000 for the remaining funds needed, but Davis said she hopes to be able to trim that figure in the end.

Following an open bid process, Davis hopes construction can begin in June.

Liz Kearney may be reached at Ikearney@livent.net.

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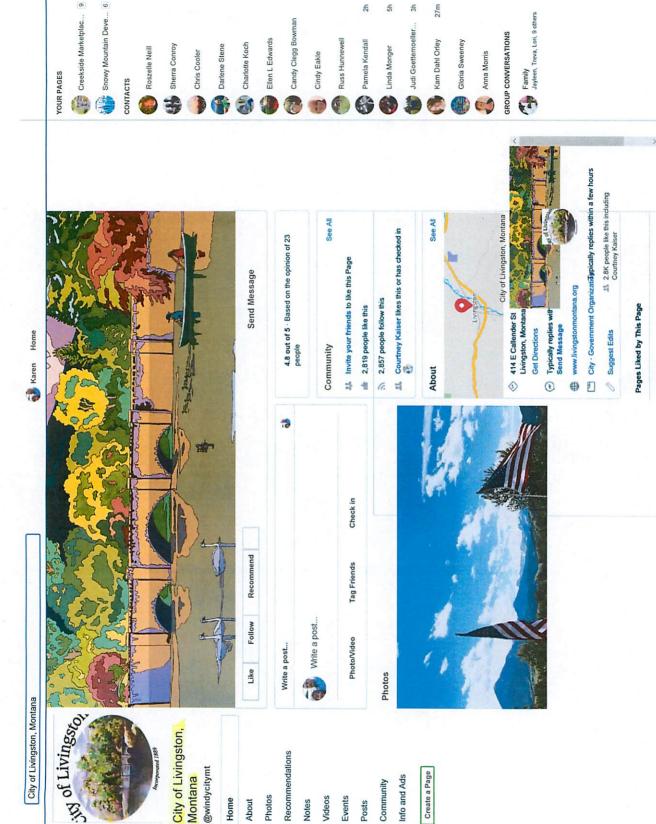
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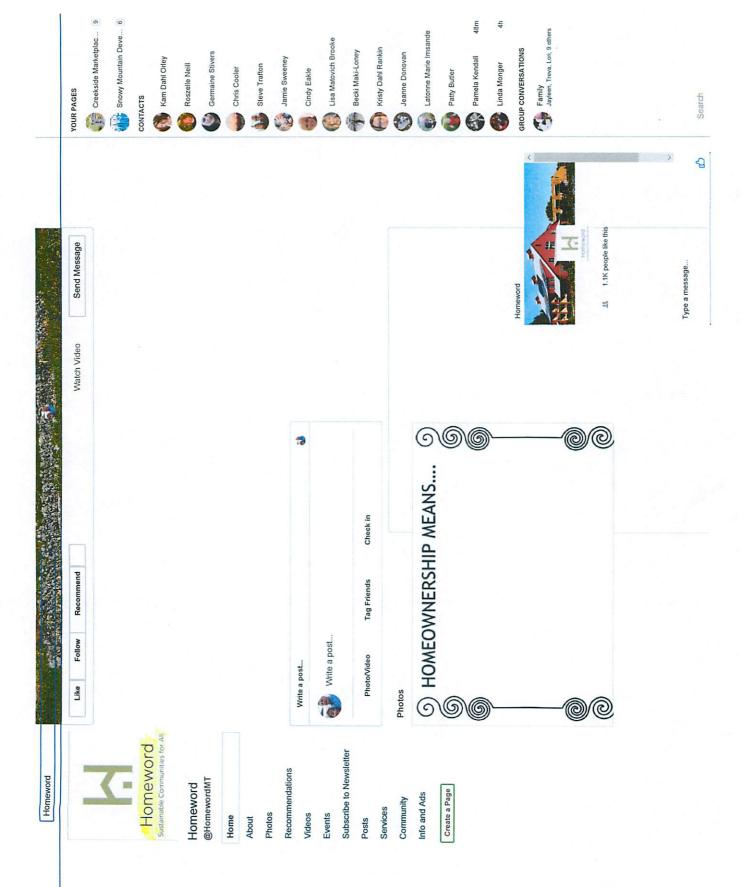




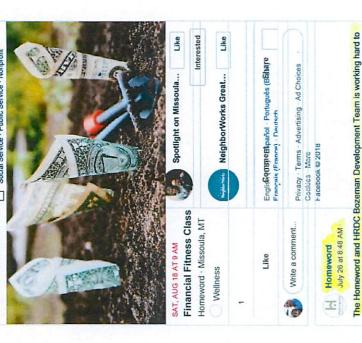


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Kristy Dahl Rankin

convert the former Livingston Memorial Hospital into 34 new homes people

can afford to rent, now known as Blue Bunch Flats.

Snowy Mountain Development Corporation's Brownfields RLF Cleanup

In preparation, the current building owner has applied for funding from

Jeanne Donovan

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reports at the Homeword offices at 1535 Liberty Lane, Berrevor6A, Missoula The public can view the Phase I and Phase II Environmental Assessment

MT during our business hours (8-5 M-Th, 8-12 F)

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housing complex, to be called Pueblich Flats. Resultsionen advironmental

Project partners plan to convert the Vacantification and unit affordable

Hospital.

Human Resource DevelopmenEGgundl of District, X-and MSLEgut County Extension Service to fund the deanup of the forment bringston Memorial

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER! NeighborWorks Montana has teamed up

with staff from Homeword, Snowy Mountain Development Corporation,

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have applied for grant and loan cleanup funds under SMDG's RLFAppageane this

The EPA must approve use of the funds on this project.

utilized in eleven Montana counties, including Park County. Project pa

Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). These funds can be

Snowy Mountain Development Corporation (SMDC) in commonly found in buildings constructed prior to the and lead-based paint) in the 1950 facility. These cont site assessment disclosed the presence of contamina

Copies of the Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessment reports

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